



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/550,302	09/22/2005	Michihiro Ohnishi	09947.0002-00000	1171

22852 7590 07/15/2009
FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW, GARRETT & DUNNER
LLP
901 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20001-4413

EXAMINER

FORMAN, BETTY J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

1634

MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
-----------	---------------

07/15/2009

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

FINAL ACTION

Status of the Claims

1. This action is in response to papers filed 13 April 2009 in which claims 1, 3-4 and 7 were amended and claims 2 and 5 were canceled. The amendments have been thoroughly reviewed and entered.

The previous rejections in the Office Action dated 13 January 2009, not reiterated below, are withdrawn in view of the amendments. Applicant's arguments have been thoroughly reviewed and are discussed below as they apply to the instant grounds for rejection. New grounds for rejection, as necessitated by the amendments, are discussed.

Claims 1 3-4 and 6-13 are under prosecution.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1, 3-4, 6-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zenhausern et al (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0011650, filed 22 July 2002 in view of Nikiforov et al (U.S. Patent No. 7,060,171, filed 24 July 2002).

Regarding Claim 1, Zenhausern et al disclose a microchip having a microchannel formed in a substrate using known techniques (§ 48), wherein the microchannel is provided with a gap wherein adjacent sides of the channel (grooved parts) have protruding parts (constrictions) forming the gap wherein the first or second protruding part is movable (i.e. “movable array of constrictions within the channel” § 61 and Fig. 2)

Zenhausern et al specifically teaches that the channeled structure “may be fabricated in a variety of ways” (§ 48) but does not specifically teach a channel formed between two grooved substrates. However, channel formation between opposing grooved substrates was well known in the art at the time the invention was made as taught by Nikiforov et al (Column 8, lines 23-28). It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the claimed invention was made to apply the grooved substrates of Nikiforov et al to the device of Zenhausern. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to do so with a reasonable expectation of success based on the suggestion of Zenhausern to use any of a variety of known techniques to construct the channels. One of ordinary skill would have been further motivated to do so for the benefit of providing a desired channel cross-sectional dimensions as taught by Nikiforov (Column 8, lines 43-61). For example, Zenhausern uses a sample immobilized on a bead (§ 108, § 270-271, Fig. 2). Forming a groove in both the top and bottom surface of the channel allows the cross section of the channel to conform to bead diameter thereby optimizing the channel for its purpose.

Regarding Claim 3, Zenhausern et al disclose the microchip wherein the gap is formed by opposed protruding parts (Fig. 2, ¶ 252).

Regarding Claim 4, Zenhausern et al disclose the microchip wherein the channel has protruding parts within the channels (Fig. 1 and 2) wherein the constriction inserts the protruding parts of the channels into the grooved channel of the opposing substrate, which are formed by bonding upper and lower substrate (¶ 48 and ¶ 60). Hence, the protrusion formed in one substrate is within the channel structure of the other substrate.

Regarding Claim 6, Zenhausern et al disclose a microchip wherein the microchannel is constricted for concentrating and/or capturing the sample at the constriction wherein the sample is immobilized on a bead (¶ 108, ¶ 270-271, Fig. 2).

Regarding Claim 7, Zenhausern et al disclose the microchip wherein the inner surface of the microchannel is treated with biocompatible materials to prevent non-specific binding (¶ 49-50).

4. Claims 8-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zenhausern et al (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0011650, filed 22 July 2002) in view of Nikiforov et al (U.S. Patent No. 7,060,171, filed 24 July 2002) as applied to Claim 1 above and further in view of Lough et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,900,481, issued 4 May 1999).

Regarding Claims 8-12, Zenhausern et al disclose a microchip having a microchannel formed in a substrate using known techniques (¶ 48), wherein the microchannel is provided with a gap having a sectional size variable by a movable

Art Unit: 1634

protruding part i.e. movable array of constrictions (§ 61, 252) and Nikiforov et al teach channel formation between opposing grooved substrates (Column 8, lines 15-61).

Zenhausern et al further teach the channels are constricted to capture nucleic acid-immobilized on beads for analysis wherein the channel diameter is less than 10µm (§ 47, 252) but they do not specifically teach the bead diameter or hydroxyl functional groups for nucleic acid attachment. However, silica particles of less than 10µm having hydroxyl functional groups were well known and routinely practiced in the art at the time the claimed invention was made as taught by Lough et al.

Lough et al teach silica microbeads having a preferred size of less than 10µm (Column 3, lines 13-15, 25-26) and hydroxyl functional groups (Fig.2) wherein the surface is treated with a silane coupling agent (Fig. 2, Columns 3-4) whereby the nucleic acids for detecting are absorbed onto the surface of the beads (Abstract). Lough et al further teach the functionalization of the beads and surfaces provides differential immobilization chemistry between the bead-surface-nucleic acids (Abstract).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the claimed invention was made to apply the bead and surface functionality of Lough et al to the particles of Zenhausern. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to do so based on the preferred differential immobilization of Lough (Abstract).

Art Unit: 1634

5. Claims 8-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zenhausern et al (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0011650, filed 22 July 2002) in view of Nikiforov et al (U.S. Patent No. 7,060,171, filed 24 July 2002) as applied to Claim 1 above and further in view of Smith et al (U.S. Patent No. 6,270,970, issued 7 August 2001) and Lough et al (U.S. Patent No. 5,900,481, issued 4 May 1999).

Regarding Claims 8-13, Zenhausern et al disclose a microchip having a microchannel formed in a substrate using known techniques (§ 48), wherein the microchannel is provided with a gap having a sectional size variable by a movable protruding part i.e. movable array of constrictions (§ 61, 252) and Nikiforov et al teach channel formation between opposing grooved substrates (Column 8, lines 15-61).

Zenhausern et al further teach the channels are constricted to capture nucleic acid-immobilized on beads for analysis wherein the channel diameter is less than 10µm (§ 47, 252) but they do not specifically teach the bead diameter or hydroxyl functional groups for nucleic acid attachment. However, silica particles of less than 10µm having hydroxyl functional groups were well known and routinely practiced in the art at the time the claimed invention was made as taught by Lough et al.

Smith et al teach silica microbeads having a preferred size of less than 10µm (Column 12, lines 16-32) and immobilization-specific functional groups (Column 14, lines 45-56) wherein the surface is treated with a silane coupling agent (Column 14, line 57-Column 15, line 12) whereby the nucleic acids for detecting are selectively absorbed onto and released from the surface of the beads based on the presence and/or

Art Unit: 1634

concentration of chaotropic salts (Column 16, line 58-Column 17, line 25) whereby the salts provide the nucleic acids in an unfolded state (Column 10, lines 43-57).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the claimed invention was made to apply the chaotropic salts of Smith et al to the hybridization methods of Zenhausern and Lough. One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to do so for the expected benefit of providing unfolded nucleic acids that are more thermodynamically stable than folded nucleic acids to thereby favor hybrid formation (Smith et al, Column 10, lines 43-57).

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant cites ¶ 252 of Zenhausern wherein the reference teaches floating electrodes. Applicant asserts that the reference does not teach a constriction or floating electrode is movable and therefore does not make obvious to claims as amended. The argument has been considered but is not found persuasive because as cited above Zenhausern specifically teaches “movable array of constrictions within the channel” ¶ 61 and Fig. 2). Therefore, Zenhausern teaches the movable protruding parts as claimed. It is maintained that the combination of Zenhausern and Nikiforov teach all the elements required by Claims 1, 3-4 and 6-7.

Applicant further asserts that Lough and Smith do not cure the deficiencies of Zenhausern and Nikiforov. The argument has been considered but is not found persuasive because, as discussed above, Zenhausern and Nikiforov are not deemed deficient. The rejections are maintained.

Conclusion

No claim is allowed.

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to BJ Forman whose telephone number is (571) 272-0741. The examiner can normally be reached on 6:00 TO 3:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, James Schultz can be reached on (571) 272-0763. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Art Unit: 1634

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

BJ Forman
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1634

/BJ Forman/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1634